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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/22/2013

TAGS: PHUM UNGA

SUBJECT: UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4(b) AND (d).

¶1. (C) UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told Ambassador Khalilzad July 22 he had spoken to Judge Pillay, his candidate for UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, after Secretary Rice's phone call. Regarding Pillay's reported problematic statement claiming "an international right to abortion," Ban said she denies ever having written or taken a public position on this issue. He said she told him she recognizes that there are fundamental differences on this issue and that she will not discriminate against those who hold opposing views.

¶2. (C) Regarding Pillay's attitudes toward NGOs, Ban said he has spoken to several, including Kenneth Roth of Human Rights Watch, and their only concern is that she has not been particularly accessible to NGOs; but Pillay explains she had to keep her distance from them as a judge, said Ban, and was quite accessible to them during her years as an anti-apartheid activist.

¶3. (C) Comment: Ban is in a hurry to announce Pillay's appointment because of the need to get General Assembly approval. This is a formality, but the effective end of the current session is rapidly approaching. Unless the United States has strong objections, Ban will submit the name to the General Assembly on July 23. He said Pillay will be invited to a UN management retreat at the end of August in Turin, Italy, and if the United States has concerns he will raise them with her there.
Khalilzad